

Help Gov. Blagojevich ease the burden of prescription drug costs

Gov. Rod Blagojevich wants to bring down prescription drug prices to save money for the people of Illinois. He is asking the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to allow Illinois to explore a plan to import approved medications from Canada for half the price.

You can help Gov. Blagojevich put pressure on the FDA to reverse its policy banning state and local governments from buying their medications for less in Canada. **Please sign the petition below.**

To Congress and the Food and Drug Administration:

While many of us cannot afford the medications we need to stay healthy, our neighbors in Canada are able to buy the same prescription drugs we use, made by the same drug makers, for half the price.

It is time for our leaders in Washington, D.C., to help ease the burden on American taxpayers and consumers by giving us access to the drugs we need at the lower prices available in Canada.

Signature: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State and Zip: _____

If you would like to include a brief statement about your struggle to pay for your prescription medications, please write your story below.

Please return your signed petition to:
Governor's Petition Drive for Lower Drug Prices
Illinois Department on Aging
421 E. Capitol Avenue, #100
Springfield, IL 62701-1789
Fax: 1-217-785-4477
www.affordabledrugs.il.gov/

Thank you for your interest in writing a letter to the editor in support of Governor Rod R. Blagojevich's fight for affordable prescription drugs.

Following is a general guideline for writing a letter to the editor. Most papers will accept letters via fax, mail, or email. Previously published editorials in support of reimporting prescription drugs from Canada are available at <http://www.affordabledrugs.il.gov/articles.cfm>.

FORMAT

Date

Newspaper Name

Newspaper Address

Dear Editor,

In the first sentence, identify the article to which you are responding, or your reason for writing to the editor. Explain why you support Governor Blagojevich's efforts to import prescription drugs from Canada. Support your opinion. You may wish to include a personal story about you or a loved one struggling to afford prescription medication or about your success in obtaining safe medications for less from Canada.

Your name

Your phone number

Your complete address

Key Points to keep in mind:

1) Americans pay the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs. The exact same drugs we use in the U.S. are available for much less in other industrialized countries. A survey by the Associated Press found Canadian prices for ten popular prescription drugs were 33 to 80 percent cheaper than prices in the United States. Cholesterol-controlling Lipitor cost 37 percent less. The anti-depressant, Paxil, cost about half as much when purchased in Canada. The arthritis drug, Vioxx, cost 58 percent less and Risperdal, an anti-psychotic, was 80 percent less.

2) The prescription drugs Governor Blagojevich wants to import from Canada are safe. Not only have these drugs have been approved by Canadian regulators, they are the exact same drugs that are approved by the FDA for purchase in the U.S., and Illinois would obtain them from safe, regulated Canadian pharmacies. There would be no question about the origin or quality of the drugs in our plan.

3) A quick review of the facts deflates drug companies' claim that allowing Americans to buy prescription drugs for less from Canada will hamper their research and development. The pharmaceutical industry is one of the most profitable industries in the whole world. The 2002 median profit rate for Fortune 500 drug companies was 17 percent, compared to 3.1 percent for *all* Fortune 500 companies. Financial records indicate marketing/administration accounts for 30.8 percent of Fortune 500 drug companies' revenue. Profit accounts for another 17 percent. Only 14.1 percent of revenue is used for research and development. Additionally, much preliminary drug research is funded by taxpayers through institutions like the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and appears in scientific journals before the big companies become involved.

We hope you have found this information useful. If you have any further questions, please contact Jennifer Wood by email at info@affordabledrugs.il.gov.

Medications *are* being re-imported legally, but only by drug makers.

- Significant quantities of prescription drugs are already imported and re-imported legally by pharmaceutical manufacturing companies. Re-importation occurs when prescription drugs are manufactured in U.S., sent to Canada, then sent back to U.S. for consumer purchase.
- American and international pharmaceutical companies have facilities located throughout the world – in Europe, Asian and South America. According to the International Trade Commission, pharmaceutical companies imported \$14.7 billion into the United States in 2001.
- Even though drug companies can import and re-import drugs, American pharmacists and distributors are prohibited from purchasing FDA-approved drugs at the much-lower prices available in other countries and passing the savings along to their customers.

Illinois is exploring ways to safely import less expensive Canadian drugs.

- Illinois would seek to meet or exceed current safeguards. The Illinois plan would abide by the Federal Drug and Cosmetic Act in its entirety.
- All medications would be dispensed with valid prescription and additional verification process.
- Only FDA-approved pharmaceuticals manufactured in FDA-approved facilities would be considered as part of an Illinois plan.

The savings for Illinois taxpayers and consumers could be great.

- Pharmaceutical companies sell the same prescription drugs at a lower price to Canadians. Recent cost comparison of Illinois and Canadian retail prices for 30 day supply include:

Prevacid (30mg)	U.S. Price: \$118	Canadian: \$65
High consumption drug in IL for acid reflex		

Actonel (30mg)	U.S. Price: \$474	Canadian: \$295
Prescribed for breast cancer survivors		

Lipitor (80mg)	U.S. Price: \$98	Canadian: \$74
For high cholesterol/high blood pressure		

Vioxx (25mg)	U.S. Price: \$98	Canadian: \$74
For arthritic conditions		

- American consumers in 2002 were charged, on average, 38 percent more than consumers in Canada, 31 percent more than citizens of Great Britain, 45 percent more than French consumers, and 48 percent more than Italian citizens.

The savings would be especially helpful for senior citizens who are hardest-hit by high drug prices.
(information from Center for policy Alternatives)

- Nearly half of all 75+ seniors live at only 200% of the poverty level.
- 1 out of 5 seniors takes at least five prescription medications a day.
- 19 million seniors have little or no prescription drug coverage and 35% of Medicare recipients lack prescription drug coverage.
- Only 4.1 million seniors receive Medicaid benefits.

While drug companies claim importing less expensive drugs would threaten their research efforts, they actually spend significantly more on marketing and advertising than research and development.

- The top 10 drug companies spent nearly three times more on marketing, public relations and administration than they did on research and development in 1999, according to shareholder reports.

- Since the Food and Drug Administration in 1997 eased its restrictions on television ads, advertisements of all types aimed at retail consumers grew from \$791 million to \$2.5 billion in 2000. Television ads in particular leaped from \$220 million in 1996 to \$1.6 billion in 2000.
- A drug industry audit showed there are 70,000 sales representatives covering 756,000 physicians, a ratio of nearly one salesperson for every 10 doctors.

There is strong public support for allowing drugs to be imported from Canada. (information from the Kaiser Health Poll Report)

- 68% of those polled favor legislation that would make it easier for people to buy prescription drugs from Canada. When given arguments for and against such legislation, 63% of the public continues to express support.

